



Caregiver Support Line – Relaxation Activity Transcript

Theme: Mountainside above a Lake

Welcome to our celebration of you! This is our opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work that you do; often around-the-clock, providing care and love for your Veteran loved one. We recognize that finding time to take care of you is difficult, often seemingly impossible. In order to help you find a few moments of calm and quiet in your jam-packed day, we are providing some short meditations to help you find ways for some daily self-care. Some time for you to distance yourself from all that goes on around you, just for a short while, so you may become calmer and develop the strength you need to continue doing your fantastic work as a Caregiver. We sincerely thank you for all you do.

Concentrative meditation is the type of meditation where you focus on an image in order to still the mind and allow a greater awareness and clarity to emerge. Think of it as the zoom lens in a camera and you are narrowing your focus to a selected field.

As we begin today's meditation, I would like to suggest you choose a quiet spot where you will not be disturbed by other people or noises as we try to eliminate distractions and interruptions during this exercise. To help you concentrate, please close your eyes if it is safe to do so, and sit in a comfortable place. Begin to feel the support you have from the chair or cushion, paying attention to the actual sensations of your body's contact with whatever you are sitting on. Find a position of stability and poise; legs uncrossed, upper body balanced over your hips, and shoulders in a comfortable but alert posture. Place your hands on your lap or your knees, letting your arms hang by their own weight, like heavy curtains, feeling stable and relaxed. As you settle, take in a deep cleansing breath and exhale out the stresses and strains you have been carrying. Again, inhale deeply and exhale gently, allowing your breath to settle into its own natural rhythm.

Today, I am going to ask you to join me on a journey to my mountain retreat. This is the peaceful place that I have created and where I "go" when I am seeking stillness and calm.

I escape by traveling to a place where there is no electricity, no telephone, no TV, and there are no people. A place to have some quiet time alone, where I can relax and am peaceful, free from the pressures of the day for just a while.



In order to create “my place of comfort and peace,” I draw upon my five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Please join me now as we journey to the lake, go up the mountain and relax at my imaginary cabin in the woods.

Traveling to the lake begins with a drive on a narrow country dirt road through a wooded grove that surrounds and comforts me. I drive slowly, feeling lulled by the rolling lane and drinking in the forest sights. I roll down my window and enjoy long, slow deep breaths. Letting my shoulders slump as I exhale, I send my problems out the window and off into the wind. Driving along at this slow speed, I am able to relax. I allow my body to feel the sway of the road and the pull of gravity as I round the gentle curves and corners. I notice the trees. Some are bare, some are budding, while others are bright green or turning brilliant shades of yellow, red and orange that comes in the fall. As I near a low-lying area with a mountain fed stream, I slow even more, hoping to catch sight of a deer, fox or other wildlife getting a cool drink of fresh water. I am rarely disappointed because this is a favorite watering hole for my woodland friends. After driving a few miles through the forest, there is a steep climb and I eagerly watch for the view at the top where I get my first glimpse of the lake below. Almost all of the 3 mile long lake is visible from this elevated spot. I smile, noticing that the lake is as calm as glass today, mirroring the beautiful mountains and sky, seemingly just for me. There are no boats or ripples to indicate any activity below. Everything is still and quiet.

At the bottom of the hill is a long dock where boats await those of us who will cross this glistening lake to reach our destinations at the far shore. The number of boats still tied to the dock tells me that there are few people at their camps on the far side of the lake right now. It is indeed very quiet. I begin to smile and feel more light-hearted as I load my provisions for the weekend into my small motorboat. I listen and notice the clear sounds of the fish splashing back into the water after breaking the surface to grab low-flying bugs, the birds sing, squirrels and chipmunks chatter, and bullfrogs croak with their deep voices. These are the sounds of heaven for me. My boat is a 14 foot wooden boat that moves gently through the water, leaving only a small wake to briefly announce my presence. After crossing the lake, my journey continues up the lake’s narrow inlet. This is a beautifully calm, serene pathway, through which the boat glides. I notice the tall marsh grasses, green at the bottom and turning brown at the top, as well as the green lily pads with their soft, white, yellow and pink flowers that float atop the water. There is a snowy egret standing still and calm, seeming to blend into the scenery as he remains immobile, but I know he is watching eagerly for small fish to glide past so he can enjoy his dinner.



It is a very short trip from this spot to my dock, just ahead. It's a worn wooden dock. The tires hung on its side prevent the boat from rubbing against the wood. I stop the engine and float the last small distance to the dock, easing the boat alongside. I tie the boat securely, knowing that I will return to the lake early tomorrow morning to throw in a line and catch a lake trout for dinner. What a feast I'll have, home-fried white and sweet potatoes, cooked with onion, and freshly caught trout that I will cook over my campfire. I can smell the wood smoke mingling with the scent of the trout, potatoes and onion. Mmmm, my mouth is watering already.

After filling my Adirondack pack filled with my provisions, I hike the trail to my cabin. In some places it is steep and other places, a gentle walk through the forest. I take my time. I stop and smell the pine trees, mosses, and the wonderfully fresh air. There is no smog; no smell of car exhaust fumes. It is just good, honest fresh air with a gentle breeze to keep me cool as I walk through the forest. I hear the small woodland creatures skittering among the leaves and undergrowth. I see the birds flying overhead from tree to tree, singing their songs and calling to one another. I smell the dampness as I cross the gentle stream that flows near the cabin, anticipating that I will soon be home. As the clearing around the cabin appears, I stop and take in the sight. This is my home; my sanctuary. This is my place. The small cabin sits in the center of a clearing with my campfire ring in front, the stream where I get my water lies to the right, and my firewood pile is to the left. The porch and the cabin beckon me forward; I unlock it and enter, setting my pack basket on the chair inside the door.

In front of me is a large cedar log bed with a quilt that my grandmother made for me. She has sewn it with loving hands and it portrays many of the things we shared through the years. There is a depiction of her home in the middle of the quilt. Surrounding her home, she has sewn representations of a canoe, a guide boat and a motorboat. She has included birds, forest animals, landmarks around the lake and my favorite, the loon, a bird that has a beautiful haunting call that can be heard on the lake in the evenings or early mornings. Across the bottom of the bed is a red and black plaid blanket for nights when I need more than the quilt and my woodstove to keep me warm. And at the top of the bed are two goose down pillows that my mother made me... so soft and fluffy. By the foot of the bed is my sofa with more pillows, and an afghan that I crocheted to be long enough that I can curl up in it and snuggle with a good book. In the right hand corner of the cabin stands my woodstove. I light the preset fire that begins to take the chill from the inside of the cabin.



Before the sun begins to lower behind the mountaintop on the far horizon and while I still have good light, I go back outside to build my campfire in front of the cabin and plan to truly enjoy the evening.

Now I can really, fully, relax. I sink slowly into my Adirondack chair on the porch. I watch the yellow flames of the campfire leaping as I calmly breathe deeply, enjoying the sights, sounds, and smells around me. I think again of the flaky, tender, pink trout I'm going to have for dinner tomorrow. I am content watching the sky turn the few feathery clouds to soft shades of pink, orange and red as they streak across the sky. Daylight wanes and the stars pop out overhead. Who knew that there are so many, many brilliant stars above? I can easily make out the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper and the North Star. The moon is full tonight, first, peeking over the mountaintop above my right shoulder, and then rising higher, illuminating the trees, the land and the water below. Dropping my head backwards and resting it gently on the tall chair, my mind drifts as the fire warms my body. I allow whatever thoughts that come into my mind to pass on through. They leave my consciousness and float into the upper atmosphere, leaving me calm, content and relaxed. I melt into my chair, feeling its firm presence supporting the full weight of my body. I listen to the owls calling one another. The owls and the loons are the two noisiest birds tonight; the other sounds are just the skittering of the animals running across the dry leaves that have fallen to the ground, the occasional pop from the fire, and the late night howling of the coy dogs and wolves. Their howls are lonely and sad.

As my sense of calm peaks, I begin to move from the peacefulness of being outdoors and I feel the chill of the night enfolding me. I slowly stand, put out the campfire and move inside where it is now warm. I place more wood on the fire for the night and snuggle under the covers, smiling at the quilt my grandmother made, making me feel comfortable and loved. I turn slowly onto my side and watch the moon and stars through the window, lazily dreaming until my eyes gently close and I drift off to sleep.

Now, let's slowly return to the present. Begin to sense your surroundings. Listening, smelling, feeling the room in which you are sitting. When you are ready, you may open your eyes.

Take a few moments to simply breathe deeply. I hope this journey has left you feeling calm, settled and ready to take on whatever may come during the remainder of your day.



I'd like to thank each of you for joining in today as we traveled by car, by boat and on foot to enjoy the quiet, peaceful serenity found on a mountainside above a lake.

We really appreciate your participation and this concludes our time for today.